

Statement of support for the Fair Justice campaign

More than a year on from the disturbances in Oldham, Bradford and Burnley, which took place with the backdrop of intense far right activity in those towns, we express our shock at the treatment meted out to the young Asian men involved. In Bradford the criminal justice process has awarded extremely biased and severe sentences. Sentences against Asian youths have included four and a half years in prison for throwing a single stone. Such harsh penalties stand in complete contrast to the treatment of white youths in similar circumstances, who have routinely faced less serious charges, resulting in significantly more lenient sentences. Such double standards are unacceptable, unfair and unjust. They sum up the institutional racism still rampant in the criminal justice system.

We endorse the call of the Fair Justice campaign for fair sentences in the trials of the hundreds of young Asian men who were mainly first time offenders, and who gave themselves up in the aftermath of the disturbances. We pledge our support for their forthcoming appeals.

Name

Organisation

Position

Address

.....

Tel

email

I enclose a donation of £.....

(make cheques payable to 'Fair Justice for All')

Return to: Fair Justice For All, Woolston House, Bradford BD12NP

What can I do?



- 1) Sign the statement of support
- 2) Write to the Home Office, Director of Public Prosecution, the West Yorkshire Police, the Media and your MP highlighting the injustices and supporting the appeals - contact us for model letters
- 3) Write letters of support to those in prison (Via contact details)
- 4) Attend vigils & rallies called by the campaign

"Perceived to be the biggest single act of discrimination in the UK." Imran Khan, Lawyer to the Lawrence Family during the Inquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence and Lawyer to the Families of Asian Youths sentenced in Bradford

"We believe our children are guilty, no-one is disputing that. But we also believe the sentencing is too harsh." Mother of a sentenced Asian Youth in Bradford

"The cases in Bradford have highlighted the treatment and experiences of black and minority ethnic youths within the Criminal Justice System for many years. Black and minority ethnic youths routinely face heavier sentences/penalties than their white counterparts for similar offences at court. There needs to be monitoring of the way those in the judiciary exercise their sentencing powers to address the issue of disproportionality as evidenced in the cases of these Bradford youths."

Reeva Bell, Chair, National Black Crown Prosecution Association

Supporters of the Fair Justice Campaign include:

Harry Cohen MP; Bill Etherington MP; Dafydd Wigley AM Wales National Assembly; Jeremy Dear, Gen. Sec. NUJ; Andy Gilchrist Gen. Sec. FBUI; Paul Mackney Gen. Sec. NATFHE; Denise McGuire President, Connect; Mick Rix Gen. Sec. ASLEF; Mark Serwotka Gen. Sec. PCS; Tony Robinson Labour Party NEC; Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism; Reeva Bell Chair, National Black Crown Prosecution Association; Lee Jasper Chair, National Black Alliance; Kumar Murshid Chair, National Assembly Against Racism; Mohamad Sawalaha President, Muslim Association of Britain; Arlington Trotman Secretary, Churches Commission for Racial Justice; Edward Bond (Playwright); Joolz Denby (Writer); Jeremy Hardy (comedian); Warren Hogg (Tour Manager); Justin Sullivan (Singer/songwriter New Model Army); Andy De La Tour (Writer); Leslee Udwin (Director, Assassin Films); Kevin Whately (Actor); Richard Wilson (Actor); Benjamin Zephaniah (Poet).

THE FAIR JUSTICE FOR ALL CAMPAIGN



"They are victims twice over: of violent racist attacks against their communities by fascist gangs; and of the institutional racism that they subsequently met."



In July 2001, Bradford Council and the Home Secretary banned a National Front (NF) march planned through the city of Bradford. However, known members of the far right NF arrived in Bradford insisting the event would proceed. Reports in the media stated that unrest was sparked off when the NF left a local pub threatening violence and shouting racist insults...

...The police failed to respond to emergency calls seeking help against the fascists' attacks. This resulted in the local community of mainly Asian people being forced to defend itself or face violent attack. The national media wrongly portrayed the disturbances as riots instigated by Asian youths, ignoring the actual role of the far right in creating fear and stirring up racial tension.

White people who took part, some of whom threw petrol bombs, were charged with minimal offences, resulting in community service and other minimal sentences. Asian youths, however, were charged with serious offences such as 'riot'. Their actions often consisted of throwing stones or simply being in the area. These extreme charges have, in turn, resulted in excessive sentencing - from four to eight years, sometimes for throwing a single stone.



The Campaign believes that these men have been scapegoated by the judicial system. **They are victims twice over: of violent racist attacks against their communities by fascist gangs; and of the institutional racism that they subsequently met.**

Those convicted were:

- In full time employment or education
- The main breadwinners of their families - their sentencing has left families economically stranded.
- First time offenders who gave themselves up to the police

The prisoners and Campaign supporters want justice. The families denounce the disturbances but feel it is vital that racism in the criminal justice system is challenged and equal justice and sentencing for all offenders is served, regardless of colour.

Aims of the Campaign:

- Raise awareness of the disproportionate sentencing.
- Provide a network of support for those in prison and their families.
- Highlight the root causes of the problems and the circumstances that led to the disturbances.



Contact Details:

Fair Justice For All, Woolston House, Tetley Street, Bradford, BD1 2NP

www.fairjusticecampaign.co.uk

email: fairjustice_forall@hotmail.com